3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

each other to live as "one body" also allowed them to operate collectively and ward off the demoralizing effects of exploitation. A central element in their religious attitude was a sense of individual honor. Love for their fellows, and a respectful disposition would find favor with God. This orientation was often expressed in terms of "manners." "A Christian is mannerable," the Gullahs were fond of saying. One Gullah soldier, in his supplications to heaven, implored, "Let me lib so dat when I die I shall ~~hab~~ manners." Northern teacher Harriet Ware described an old Gullah woman, Widow Bedotte, who had been driven insane by watching her master whip her daughter to death; "very sad it is to hear her talk," wrote Ware. Yet, although Widow Bedotte's epithets against her master and the rebels were voluble and denunciatory, "she prides herself upon her good manners, which she says she gets because she belongs to the church, which every now and then she joins again." Charlotte Forten observed the Gullahs' attitude toward each other:

> These people are exceedingly polite in their manner towards each other, each new arrival bowing, scraping his feet and shaking hands with the others, while there are constant greetings such as, "Huddy? How's yer lady?" ("howd' ye do? How's your wife?") The hand-shaking is performed with the greatest possible solemnity. There is never the faintest shadow of a smile on anybody's face during this performance. The children, too are taught to be very polite to their elders, and it is the rarest thing to hear a disrespectful word from a child to his parent, or to any grown person. They have really what the New-Englanders call "beautiful manners."[9]

Despite enslavement and poverty, the Gullahs maintained a generous attitude, never allowing one of their number to go without food or shelter. Kinship was important, but the Gullah concept of a household did not necessarily mean filial attachment, but all those living within a family and community structure, with the rights, duties, and privileges therein. While there were many children without parents because of the ravages of bondage, reportedly there were no orphans on the Sea Islands. Gullahs were also fond of bestowing presents upon their Northern benefactors, or anyone whom they considered a friend. Gifts of sweet potatoes, peanuts, and eggs which had a special spiritual significance and were rather expensive, were often offered to visitors. "They feel hurt if their presents are refused," wrote Laura Towne. "Old Susannah often sends to table, fish and other extras. They don't want pay. No indeed."[10]

While the Christian example contributed to inspiring a kindred spirit, the Gullah's sense of charity also had another source. African peoples

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

of Plantation Membership on St. Helena Island, South Carolina," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Rochester, 1977).

5. *SCA*, July 28, 1843; Rupert Holland, ed. *Letters and Diary of Laura M. Towne* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969; repr. from 1912 ed.) 162; Rev. Augustine Roots to Rev. Jocelyn, February 8, 1863, AMA; Woofter, *Black Yeomanry*, 243–54; Jenkins Mikell, *Rumblings of the Christ Wheels* (Columbia: The State Co., 1923), 138; Lawton, "Religious Life," 62–63, 69–72; Guthrie, "Catching Sense," Chapters 4 and 5.

6. Towne Diary, passim; Guthrie, "Catching Sense," 95–97, 117–18; Elsie Clews Parsons, *Folk-lore of the Sea Islands of South Carolina* (Cambridge, Mass: American Folk-lore Society, 1923), 205–6; Lawton, "Religious Life," 61–23, 69–70.

7. Lawton, "Religious Life," 61–63; Guthrie, "Catching Sense," 95–118. The Praise House membership consisted of households. These units were not always filial and might consist of several "outside children." Yet if these children "caught sense" in that household, they were members of that plantation. They were also members of the Praise House, could be buried in the plantation graveyard, and after slavery, could use the land. Plantation members tried to keep nonmembers off the land. Guthrie, "Catching Sense," 116–22.

8. Pierce, "Negroes at Port Royal," 305; Towne Diary, 55; Frances Anne Kemble, *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1863), 167–68; Rev. W. T. Richardson to Rev. Jocelyn, August 7, 1863, AMA; Arthur Sumner to Nina Hartshorn, May 18, 1862, Penn School Papers, vol. 4, SHC.

9. Diary of William F. Allen, William F. Allen Family Papers, 1775–1937, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, 106–7, 145, 164; Elizabeth Hyde Botume, *First Days Amongst the Contrabands* (New York: Arno Press and New York Times, 1968, repr. from 1893 ed.), 125–26; Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment* (New York: Collier Books, 1962, repr. from 1870 ed.), 48; Elizabeth Ware Pearson, *Letters from Port Royal* (New York: Arno Press and New York Times, 1969, repr. from 1906 ed.), 198; Charlotte Forten "Life on the Sea Islands," Part I, *Atlantic Monthly* 13 (May, 1864): 592.

10. Guthrie, "Catching Sense," 55–57, 119–23; Grace Bigelow House, "The Little Foe of All the World," *Southern Workman* 35 (1906): 603; Wister, "Recollections," 14; Allen Diary, 45; Towne Diary, 13.

11. Ruth Finnegan, *Survey of the Limba People of Northern Sierra Leone* (London: HMS, 1965), 69–80; Robert T. Parsons, *Religion in an African Society*, 99–100; Folkways Research Series, *The Traditional History and Folklore of the Gola Tribe in Liberia*, 2 vols. (Monrovia: Dept. of the Interior, 1961) II: 55–56; Thomas Winterbottom, *An Account of the Native Africans in the Neighborhood of Sierra Leone*, 2 vols. (London: Frank Cass, 1969; repr. from 1803 ed.) I: 211; Wyatt MacGaffey, *Custom and Government in the Lower Congo* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), 103.

12. Mikell, *Christ Wheels*, 139–41.

13. W. T. Harris and Harry Sawyerr, *The Springs of Mende Belief and Conduct: A Discussion of the Influence of the Belief in the Supernatural among the Mende* (Freetown: Sierra Leone University Press) 103; W. C. Willoughby, *The Soul of the Bantu: A Sympathetic Study of the Magico-Religious Practices and Beliefs of the Bantu Tribes of Africa* (Newport, Conn.: Negro Universities Press, 1970, originally published 1928), 393.

14. *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, 271–72, BC; James R. Stuart Recollections, n.d., circa 1850, 2–4, SHC; *SCA*, June 26, 1843; Holland, *Towne Letters and Diary*, 162, 145; Cooley, *School Acres*, 148–49; Charles A. Raymond "The Religious Life of the Negro Slave," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 27 (September, 1863): Part I, 479.

6: Smith I,Y-5 (no date) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

121 cohesiveness than in Sea Island society.

The following quote by Crum rather clearly notes the Gullah people as a unique research population:

> In a very real sense the history of these people furnishes a key to the whole race situation in America. In their isolation the Gullahs provide materials for an interesting social study. It is significant that nowhere on the continent can a purer African culture be found. Until recent years the whole area has been cut off from the rest of the world. The cultural and geographical isolation of these (blacks) offers an absolutely unique situation to the student interested in human relations.[8]

PRIOR GULLAH RESEARCH

121 197 The Gullah dialect and studies of folk beliefs are the features of Sea Island communities which have been most frequently researched. The earlier studies aimed at isolating the origin of Gullah identified the dialect as a corrupted form of old English learned from lowly European immigrants.[9] On the other hand, Crum[10] proposes that the extraordinary politeness and gentle manners which have

[576] [177]

[8]Mason Crum, Gullah: Negro Life in the Carolina Sea Islands (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1950), p. 3.

[9]Ambrose Gonzales, Black Borders, Columbia, S. C., 1922; Krapp, The English of the Negro, American Mercury, June, 1924; H. L. Mencken, The American Language, N. Y., 1936 ed.; Reed Smith, Gullian, Bulletin of the University of South Carolina #190, 1926.

[10]Cru, op. cit., p. 4.

121 become characteristic of Sea Islanders were a result of
197 early exposure to "cultured" White plantation owners. The
[576 conflicting feature of these two notions is evident.
[177 Turner's research cleared up much of the confusion relative to the origin of Gullah.[11] His report that the dialect is highly reflective of linguistic systems common to West Africa provides a geographical origin of Gullah Blacks.
121 That the Gullah dialect has features which are identifiable
197 as distinctly West African linguistic habits is consistent
174 with the research which places West Africa as the origin of the Gullah Blacks. Donnan[12] offers the following list as illustrative of the African origin of Sea Islanders:

Gambia to Sierra Leone
Liberia and the Ivory Coast
(Rice and Grain Coasts)
Guinea Coast (Gold Coast to Calabar)
Angola and the Congo

121 Herskovits, Crum and others propose that the rela-
174 tively recent arrival of West Africans to the Sea Islands
178 and the isolation of these islands has been conducive to the retention of African cultural elements. Herskovits suggests that the last population of Africans coming directly to the Charleston Sea port was about 1850. Researchers are in agreement that nowhere in the United States

---

[11] Lorenzo Turner, Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect (Chicago, 1949).

[12] E. Donnan, The Slave Trade into South Carolina before the Revolution, Am. Hist. Rev. 33: 804-828, 1927-28.

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

speaker of unadulterated Gullah gives a mouth-full-of-mush effect, rolling out his short-clipped words with a rapidity which is amazing to those who think that all Negroes drawl. An accurate recording of this pure type is very difficult, and, when done, gives a peculiar result indeed. Jones, Gonzales, Whaley, and a few others have succeeded very well in reducing it to writing. Their results are quite different from those of Mrs. Christensen and Mrs. Parsons, in part because the latter collected their stories from people who spoke a modified Gullah.[9]

Two persons rarely hear the same sounds exactly alike. If they do, they will probably represent them differently in writing. Some dialect writers, having achieved the "accurate recording" state of mind, carry the thing to the extreme and spell phonetically many words which are pronounced in the standard way by Negroes and white people. For example, a writer who would spell his own pronunciations of *little*, *victual*, *about*, in the standard way, is sometimes guilty of representing Negro speech as *littul* or *lit'l*, *vittle* or *vittul*, and *uhbout* when the Negro and the standard pronunciations are alike.

The following specimens will not only serve to introduce the reader to the phonology, grammar, and idiom of the dialect, but will give him some idea of the variations due to locality and to the method of recording.

1[10]

Buh Lion bin a hunt, an eh[1] spy Buh Goat duh leddown[2] topper er big rock duh wuk eh mout an der chaw. Eh creep up fuh

[1] Like everyone else, these Negroes have "company manners." When talking to a stranger, especially to a white man, they tend to tone down their speech so that it is more easily understood than is their ordinary conversation with one another.

[10] From Jones, *Negro Myths from the Georgia Coast*, p. 38. Explanatory notes are printed below each of the excerpts which follow.

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

9. Don' take no mo' on yo' heels dan you can kick off wid yo' toes. 538
10. Feed you wid corn, choke you wid de cob.

TOASTS, RHYMES, AND GAMES

The young people know quite a few "toasts," play rhymes, game songs, and the like. Sometimes even an adult will respond to a request to "say a piece" at a party by giving a bit of child's verse. On one occasion a man recited in a formal manner a little piece beginning, 524 538 (539)

> My pretty pink, I really think
> That you and I should marry.

Some of the rhymes and games are very old, having been brought over by the English. Others are of recent origin and introduction. Some of the rhymes, for example, are survivals of ante-bellum minstrel verse, and a few are attempts at original verse. (177)

Toasts[20] 273 514 516 539

I

Some water I hol' in dis glass
Between my finger an' t'umb.
If I don' drink it all,
I lef' you some.

II

The rose is red
An' violets are blue,
Honey is sweet
An' so are you.

[20] For four other toasts, see Parsons, p. 176. For numerous American versions of children's games, rhymes, etc., see W. W. Newell, *Games and Songs of American Children*.

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

III

273 Thou art my love, and I am thine,
514 I drew thee for my valentine.
• 516
539

IV

The glass is full of water
And the pail is full of wine,
The world is full of boys and girls,
But, honey, you are mine.

Other Verses

I

Some people have one coat,
T'ank God, I got two.
All de week I wear a ragged coat,
On Sunday my long-tail blue.

II

I went to de jail-house on my knees,
Firs' t'ing I saw was a pan o' peas.
Peas was red an' meat was fat—
Got stuck on de jail-house jus' fuh dat.

III

I went to de hen-house de odder night,
It was awful dark an' I had no light.
Only de roostah givin' out de hymn,
Givin' out de hymn fuh de hen o' prayah.
Did he preach it!

IV

'Possum on de 'simmon tree
A-winkin' down on me.
I pick up a stick, an' I was so shy,
I pop um across ol' 'possum's eye.

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

273
524
526
539

V

'Possum on de 'simmon tree,
Sparrow on de groun';
'Possum t'row de 'simmon down,
Sparrow shake um 'roun'.

VI

Hawk an' buzza't went to law,
Hawk come back wid a broken jaw.

VII

When I been a little boy
I stayed by myself.
All de bread an' cheese I git,
I put um on de shelf.
De rat an' mice, I nevah see de like.
Rough shirt, standin' collah,
'Nough to make a niggah hollah.
Walk in, John, I'll be yo' frien',
I'm ridin' on a pickynut tree.

VIII[21]

I had a little pony,
His name was Dimple Gray.
I len' him to a lady,
She ride him miles away.
She whip him, she lash him,
She ride him t'rough de mire.
I wouldn' len' my pony 'g'in
Fo' all de lady hire.

IX

All of a row,
Bend a bow,
Shot at a pigeon
And killed a crow.

[21] Compare a similar rhyme, with tune, given by Parsons, p. 185.

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

X

273
574
576
539

Nose, nose, jolly red nose.
What gave you that jolly red nose?
Nutmegs and cinnamon, spice an clo'es,
They give me this jolly red nose.

XI[22]

There was an old man
And he had a calf,
And that's half.
He took him out of the stall
And put him on the wall,
And that's all.

XII

Since that lady gave you that box,
You look like you are going to have the chicken-pox.

Since people walk on the street,
You are name the days of the week.

Since people don't always go to work on time,
I am writing rhymes.

Where are you going, Jack?
You look like you just come back.

Hello, Si.
You look like you going to cut some rye.

Where is my dog
I took for the frog
That was sitting on the log?

[22] This and the one following were written down and turned in by pupils in two of the Island schools. Apparently they are attempts at original rhymes.

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

Where are you going, Mary?
You look so contrary.

273
574
575
539

Play Rhymes and Games[23]

I

Eeny, meeny, miny, mo,
Ketch a neighbor by 'e toe,
If 'e holler, let 'im go.

539
524

II

Ink stink, tobacco stink,
Ketch a neighbor by his toe,
If he holler, let 'im go.

III

Eeny, meeny, dilly, deany,
Hit um a lick an' John de guney.
Time, time, American time,
Eighteen hundred an' ninety-nine.

IV

Cod fish, cod fish,
How many cod fish do you wish?
Four spell four an' you're clean out
Wid yo' mudder dirty dish clot' in yo' mout'.

V

William, William, thrumble toe,
He's a good fisher man.
Ketches hen, put um in de pen.
Wi', bri', limber lock,
T'ree geese in a flock,
One flew eas', one flew wes',
One flew over de cuckoo nes'.
O-U-T spells *out*,
You ol' dirty dish rag, *you!*

[23] I-VII are counting-out rhymes. No. VIII is a hide-and-seek form.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

248 175 (657) men, for the young men were still away in the army or at work in the camps for "cash money." Across the road the cotton was scarcely up, struggling bravely against wild phlox and grass, a picturesque battle bearing witness that the owner would beg for Government rations in the winter and perhaps stand by and see his land sold for taxes a few years later.

794 175 The freedmen, some of them now making their second crop on their own little "plantations," were on their way to "Brick Church" to hear "old Massa Richard,"[1] who had preached to them before "big gun shoot," speak in the open under the moss-hung live oaks. They crowded (492) (493) the road, a gaily-dressed throng of black folk, some on foot, some on horseback, some in wagons, others in the rude ox cart of plantation days, some even in northern trotting buggies drawn by Government-condemned horses which the proud owners had bought for perhaps as much as $300 cash. They were a colorful sight in their gaudy (292) calicoes and crinolines. The younger women wore straw bonnets, stays, and cotton gloves, but the grannies clung to their many-colored handkerchiefs and their loose gowns cut after the fashion of slavery days.

Their loud laughter and gay chatter rang out as they passed through the gates which in plantation days had made a private road to the church. As a buggy containing a group of white teachers and superintendents approached, those on foot stopped and drew aside, out of respect, to let the vehicle pass. The old women gave the white party a droll bob of the head, the young ones made

794 •516 175

[1] The Reverend Richard Fuller, former pastor of "Brick Church" and owner of a plantation on St. Helena Island.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

175 H4 576.

curtseys, and the men touched their hats in a soldier's salute, or swept them quickly from their heads.

The Reverend Richard Fuller created a sensation when he arrived. Stares brightened and eyes grew moist. Amid shouts of "Bress de Lo'd, Bres de Lo'd!" "Hebenly Massa!" "Gra-a-ate King!" he mounted to the platform. When all were seated a quaint old man, clad in cotton checks, bowed from many years of cotton hoeing, stepped out on the platform and, leaning on his cane, gently swaying his body as if to keep time, struck up in a shrill, cracked voice the tune:

793 796 175 (533) (539)

"Ma-a-assa Fullah a sittin' on de tree ob life
For to yeddy when Jordan roll,
Roll, Jordan; roll, Jordan,
Roll, Jordan, roll."

And then a plain, middle-aged black preacher came forward and commenced a prayer, which he pursued at great length with frequent interruptions from the congregation of "Amen," "Glory," and "Lo'd, do!" They had already been to their praise-house meetings twice during the week and some of them earlier that morning, but they were none the less eager for this Sunday-noon meeting when fellow freedmen from all over the Island gathered for worship and recreation.[2]

(782)

A few former planters, like the Reverend Richard Fuller, had returned to Beaufort to try to take up life again in the little town now overrun with freedmen, Fed-

175

[2] The foregoing description is based on Reid, *After the War: A Southern Tour*; "The South As It Is," *Nation*, Dec. 1865, pp. 746-747; J. W. Alvord, *Letters from the South*, pp. 8-10; Charles Nordoff, *The Freedmen of South Carolina*; S. G. W. Benjamin, "The Sea Islands," *Harper's Monthly*, LVII, 839-861.